



Standing Room Only

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, February 16, 2009

Last week at the Rules committee, there was a standing- room-only crowd to support our request to use \$1.9 million to fund the citywide school crossing guard program on a temporary basis (three fiscal years) out of the \$9 million the City receives from the tobacco settlement monies.

The reasoning for this request is that the 60-year-old crossing guard program should not be eliminated, as has been suggested, to balance the budget.

This issue brought out five school superintendents, two principals, three elected board trustees, crossing guards, police personnel, and numerous parents from neighborhoods such as Almaden Valley, Cambrian and Santa Teresa.

These supporters spoke in favor of our request, and the need to make hard choices, for nearly a hour. The Franklin-McKinley Superintendent shared that crossing guards were more then people trained to assist pedestrians crossing busy streets; he stated that crossing guards are watchful eyes for the children when it comes to outside influences. He continued by explaining that he is on the Mayor's Gang Task Force, and that crossing guards look out for children as they walk to school to make sure they are not approached by gang members. Definitely a good point that pertains to our entire city, but especially the greater Downtown neighborhoods and the East Side. There will be more to come on this issue so **stay tuned**.

On another note, the council accepted the mid-year budget cuts last Tuesday. We were short \$9 million—which is the same amount as the HNMF/tobacco money. Items that will directly affect service to taxpayers that took the axe included proposals to eliminate all money from the traffic-calming budget, to start turning off street lights in non residential areas, to reduce grants to fix homeowners sidewalks, and to eliminate the street maintenance and repair reserve fund.

Jennifer Maguire, the City's budget director, shared that the city is forecasting that we will be short an additional \$6 million on revenues, which could push our budget deficit as high as \$71 million by June. The big number comes out in March when we get an update on our sales tax revenue.

The same meeting also discussed the results from the citywide survey which was conducted by a consultant that included 500 San Jose residents. Half of those surveyed were "likely voters" and the other half were picked from a random computer-generated list. I asked that we try to expand the survey to 1,000 residents to make it a bit broader, since the cost of expanding the survey is incremental. Also, when we are asking questions about the city I think we should only ask likely voters since they actually took the time to vote.

At least two-thirds of residents found the following potential reductions in city spending "somewhat" or "completely" acceptable to cut:

- Reducing the size of pay increases for city employees (79 percent)
- Reducing funds for recruiting, training and recognizing city employees (73 percent)
- Reducing branch library hours by one day per week (70 percent)
- Closing some city pools and aquatics centers (67 percent)
- Reducing maintenance of city buildings (67 percent)
- Reducing the size of benefit packages provided by city employees (66 percent)

On raising revenue:

- 78 percent supported selling old City Hall
- 76 percent supported selling advertising on city owned property
- 73 percent supported selling city owned golf courses
- 60 percent supported selling the Hayes Mansion.

Do these results match your opinions?

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